

From: Kevin Taylor
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft and the affect on education

As a consumer and computer professional, I have a great deal of first-hand experience in the affects of the Microsoft monopoly on the lives of Americans and want to share them with you along with my comments.

A recent, and most disturbing episode that is **directly** relevent to the remedy offered by Microsoft and accepted by the DOJ. My wife, a student at the University of Texas at Dallas, is currently in an environment very much like one that this settlement would create all over the United States. An environment where Microsoft products are very close to free (\$18 for MS Office, compared to \$600+ for consumers, for example) because of an "agreement" between UT and Microsoft.

In this environment, my wife had to take a mandatory course for anyone graduating with a business (or business-related) degree. This course says nothing about Microsoft products, quite the contrary really - it says you will learn about basic computer functions, as well as word processing, spreadsheets, etc. In the first meeting of this class, the professor said the words that students all over this country will be hearing if this remedy is put in place:

"I will only accept documents in Microsoft Office XP format, you can pick it up down at the bookstore for \$18"

The problem doesn't stop there. The actual course material that this institute of higher learning is using reads more like a Microsoft commercial than an impartial introduction to computers that "well-rounded" people should received in college. The course materials are all done in Microsoft proprietary formats, and include a slide sporting the picture of Bill Gates, claiming him to be "the most influential man in computers". In this same courseware, there is a slide talking about operating systems. **Every** shipping operating system from microsoft is listed, and over 20 operating systems (just that **I** know of) that are Microsoft compeditors are not.

These students are the policy- and decision-makers of the future, and everyone one of them from UT will **only** know about Microsoft technologies, and being ignorant of alternatives will push these solutions in the business world of the future. Not because it is "innovative", not because it is even the "best" solution - but because they don't know about anything else. They have been indoctrinated by school mandate, and that is the end of the story.

The most likely, and most frightening, possibility to emerge from the

proposed settlement is that this problem will not be limited to the University of Texas, but to every University in this country. What would make it worse is that it would no longer be school mandated indoctrination, but government mandated.

Just imagine if those overseeing the anti-trust hearings for AT&T had simply said - "Your punishment is to make long-distance service cheaper for families with children", or worse yet, "you must give out free extra lines to families with children". Today, we would all have AT&T service, and I'm quite sure it wouldn't be 7 cents/minute.

I urge you to consider real behavioral remedy, if it is going to be taken. Make them open up their file formats, so that compeditors can interoperate and compete for market share. Make them pay money, not software (which really costs them nothing at all). (As Microsoft has proven with the University of Texas, they are making these deals for near-free software with schools without being forced to - and not because it's charity, but because it's good business for the future.

To really give competition a chance, make them pay the damages (as money, not software) to a non-profit foundation that can be used to help software projects that compete with Microsoft to get equal access to markets. If Microsoft will give software to schools, then this fund could be used to help offset the costs of smaller compeditors to do the same. Students, and all Americans, should have choice, and if breaking up Microsoft is not the solution, we must make sure that Microsoft cannot use its size and cash reserves to prevent others from having access to student and consumer mindshare as well.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider a remedy that will insure a future that is full of opportunity for all. The worst thing to come of this would be to find ourselves in this same monopolized environment in 10 years, but with one key difference - *no* competing companies left to choose from.

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